

REQUEST FOR THE CONSERVATION OF *CONUS*
FERGUSONI G.B. SOWERBY III, 1873, UNDER THE
PLENARY POWERS (GASTROPODA: CONIDAE).
Z.N.(S.) 2239

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For many years malacologists have used the binomen *Conus fergusonii* G.B. Sowerby III, 1873: 145, based on "several specimens collected at Panama by Mr Ferguson" for a common and distinctive species of Panamic cone shell (the term "Panamic" indicates the Pacific side of the isthmus). However, a review of the identity of certain poorly known species of *Conus* reveals that *C. fulvocinctus* Crosse, 1872: 214, described from the B. Thomas collection, "Habitat ad littora Africae occidentalis", is a senior synonym of *C. fergusonii*.

2. *Conus fulvocinctus* Crosse has previously been considered a valid species of West African distribution (Tomlin, 1937; Wagner and Abbott, 1967). These authors apparently based their identifications on Crosse's (1872) citation of West Africa as the type-locality. However, examination of a photograph (courtesy of the British Museum, Natural History) of the holotype of *C. fulvocinctus* indicates that the type-locality is erroneous since the holotype of *C. fulvocinctus* is a specimen of the species later described as *C. fergusonii* G.B. Sowerby III. The only West African species that *C. fulvocinctus* is even remotely similar to is *C. ambiguus* Reeve. There is little possibility that the holotype of *C. fulvocinctus* is conspecific with *C. ambiguus* Reeve. The following differences in shell morphology were noted in a comparison of the photograph of the holotype of *C. fulvocinctus* to a series of *C. ambiguus* (25 specimens collected from Senegal, Cape Verde Islands, and Angola). The largest specimen of *C. ambiguus* that I have seen or that has been mentioned in the literature was 51 mm long and most specimens are 25–45 mm long. The holotype of *C. fulvocinctus* is well over 70 mm long, a size that is commonly reached and exceeded by *C. fergusonii*. Further the holotype of *C. fulvocinctus* and specimens of *C. fergusonii* do not have the scattered spiral ridges on the body whorl and the well developed spiral cords on the spire whorls which are present in *C. ambiguus*. The spire whorls of the latter are marked by irregular brown flammules or blotches whereas those of *C. fulvocinctus* are not so

marked. The holotype of *C. fulvocinctus* has a light brown band below the shoulder. Indistinct bands such as this are commonly found on specimens of *C. fergusonii* of this size (Nybakken, 1970). While *C. ambiguus* may have irregular areas of brown on an otherwise white shell none of the specimens I have examined or seen figured in the literature have these brown areas restricted to a band below the shoulder.

3. *Conus fulvocinctus* has been used as a valid name at least twice in the last fifty years (see Tomlin, 1937 and Wagner and Abbott, 1967) and cannot be said to be a *nomen oblitum*. However, the name is functionally obsolete since it has never been correctly associated by subsequent authors with the Panamic cone shell upon which it was based.

4. The binomen *Conus fergusonii*, however, has been consistently applied to the Panamic species from the time Sowerby proposed the name up to the present time (see Abbott, 1974; Dall, 1910; Emerson and Old, 1962; Hanna, 1963; Hanna and Strong, 1949; Hill, 1959; Keen, 1958; Marsh, 1968; Melvin, 1966; Nybakken, 1970; Sowerby, 1887 for instance). Although I was not able to locate the holotype of *C. fergusonii*, Sowerby's description and figure are consistent only with the Panamic species and subsequent authors have undoubtedly identified the species correctly.

5. Since the name *C. fergusonii* has been universally applied to the Panamic species and since the revival of the forgotten name *C. fulvocinctus* for the Panamic species would disrupt nomenclatural stability in a genus already badly beset with nomenclatural problems, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is requested:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to rule that the specific name *fulvocinctus* Crosse, 1872, as published in the binomen *Conus flavocinctus*, is not to be given priority over the specific name *fergusonii* G.B. Sowerby III, 1873, as published in the binomen *Conus fergusonii*, by anybody who believes those two names to be synonyms;
- (2) to place the specific name *fulvocinctus* Crosse, 1872, as published in the binomen *Conus fulvocinctus*, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology with an endorsement that it is not to be given priority over the specific name *fergusonii* G.B. Sowerby III, 1873, as published in the binomen *Conus fergusonii*, by anybody who believes the two names to be synonyms;
- (3) to place the specific name *fergusonii* G.B. Sowerby III, 1873, as published in the binomen *Conus fergusonii*, on

the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology with an endorsement that it is to be given precedence over the specific name *fulvocinctus* Crosse, 1872, as published in the binomen *Conus fulvocinctus*, by anybody who believes the two names to be synonyms.

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